



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Michael Luisi, Chairman
Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
800 North State Street
Suite 201
Dover, DE 19901

OCT 23 2018

Dear Mike:

This letter is to inform you that on October 22, 2018, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), acting on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, approved Amendment 20 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan (RIN 0648-BH16).

As you know, Amendment 20 creates a tiered permit system for longfin squid and a separate butterfish moratorium permit, allows vessel owners a one-time opportunity to swap longfin squid moratorium permits among vessels they own, and reduces longfin squid possession limits for incidental permits and for all permits once the Trimester II (May – August) longfin squid quota is landed. These measures are intended to preserve economic opportunities for more recently active participants in the longfin squid fishery, avoid historic quota overages during Trimester II, and minimize impacts to spawning aggregations and associated egg mops.

We published a notice of availability (NOA) soliciting public comments on Amendment 20 on July 27, 2018 (83 FR 25602), and a proposed rule on August 31, 2018 (83 FR 44548), with comments accepted through September 25, and October 1, respectively. We received 6 comments during the NOA and the proposed rule public comment periods, including one comment letter from Pew Charitable Trusts referencing 13,074 form letter comments submitted during previous public hearings. We received comments both supporting and opposing the proposed measures, with Pew advocating that we also implement a 12-mile spawning closure south of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket to prevent localized depletion and protect spawning squid and egg mops. We will publish a summary of the comments received and our responses to these comments in the final rule.

We appreciate the Council's efforts on this action and its ongoing work to sustainably manage the Atlantic mackerel, squid, and butterfish fisheries.

Sincerely,

For Michael Pentony
Regional Administrator

Cc: Dr. Christopher Moore, Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Council

